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TAGS: [MCAP](#) [MARR](#) [ASEC](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA: OBSERVATION OF MARITIME RESPONSE SQUADRON
ACOTA TRAINING

¶1. (SBU) Naval Attache and Deputy Political Counselor visited Saldanha Naval Base on November 24 to observe a State Department Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) course

in progress for members of new South Africa's Maritime Response Squadron. The visit was coordinated through the Pretoria Office of Security Cooperation and State Department contractor Northrop Grumman: Training and Simulation Group.

¶2. (SBU) Naval Attach and POLOFF arrived at Saldanha Naval Base (approximately 150 km north of Cape Town) just as a high-level South African delegation was leaving the base. ACOTA team members John Kelly, Don Bobo, Tim Westrook, Brian Rich and Bon Linsey greeted us and briefed us on their work since November 5th. The trainers said they had been working daily with an average of approximately 30 members of the Maritime Response Squadron, a number of whom are expected to deploy to relieve another unit which is currently deployed as part of a specialized UN peacekeeping unit charged with maritime interdiction duties in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

¶3. (SBU) The ACOTA teams briefed us on the drowning prevention training they had just completed, commenting that only three out of thirty trainees were competent to handle themselves in the water carrying full gear before the training but all thirty had progressed to the point of having full confidence operating in the water. Despite the trainees' limited experience with maritime operations, the ACOTA team praised their trainees as a reliable unit of good marksmen led by an exemplary young ensign. Emboffs looked on as the trainees and their instructors prepared for a boat launching exercise.

¶4. (SBU) Returning from escorting the visiting South African VIPs, Commander Roy Combrink led Naval Attache and POLOFF from the ACOTA training to tour a base camp assembled to house 100 Maritime Response Squadron members. The base camp was fully equipped and capable of operating for thirty days before being resupplied. The enclosed camp contained comfortable-looking eight-man tents, two-man tents, a weight training tent, an cardiovascular exercise tent, dining and ablution facilities, waste management, water purification, generators, boat repair facilities, fuel bladders, and equipment.

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